

HIV Vaccine Awareness Day – May 18th. Real People. Real Progress.

SAMPLE OPINION-EDITORIAL (OP-ED)

**HIV Vaccine Awareness Day
May 18, 2004
HIV Vaccine Research: Real People. Real Progress.**

The statistics are staggering. Today, approximately 40 million people around the world are estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS. Of these, 37 million are adults and 2.5 million are children under the age of 15. In the United States, 40,000 people contract HIV each year, with half of new infections occurring in young people under the age of 25. That is more than 100 people per day. Nearly fifty percent of those new infections in the United States are among people of color.

May 18th is HIV Vaccine Awareness Day. It is a day to educate Americans about the need for vaccines to prevent HIV. This year's theme is "Real People. Real Progress." We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of thousands of study volunteers, scientists and health professionals committed to finding a safe and effective vaccine. With the help of these people behind the science, much progress has been made toward developing a safe and effective preventive HIV vaccine. Currently, there are over 20 promising HIV vaccine candidates in various stages of testing. Yet, there is still no vaccine. We are all in this together. All Americans, especially at-risk populations, such as communities of color and those who are sexually active, need to learn more about HIV vaccine research and be a part of making an HIV vaccine a reality.

For the second year in a row, the day will be commemorated with a twist on a familiar symbol of AIDS awareness. Organizers are asking people to recognize HIV vaccine research by wearing a red AIDS ribbon upside down on HIV Vaccine Awareness Day (May 18th). The upside-down AIDS ribbon forms a "V," for "vaccines," the vision of a world without AIDS, and symbolizes the urgent need to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Scientists have been searching for a safe and effective vaccine to prevent HIV infection since the virus was first identified in 1984. Each new test or clinical trial brings us one step closer to finding an effective vaccine like other successful vaccines in history such as polio and smallpox. To date, more than 12,000 individuals have already volunteered in HIV vaccine clinical trials, more than 20 promising HIV vaccines are in various stages of testing and more vaccines will be studied in the next two years than in the last five years combined.

On May 18th, we thank the *real people*, the volunteers and researchers, who have made *real progress* and taken significant steps toward developing a safe and effective preventive HIV vaccine. The courage of volunteers is hopeful, the commitment of researchers is promising and the education of communities across the country is on-going. We are all in this together; take the time today and everyday to learn more about HIV vaccine research and be a part of making an HIV vaccine a reality.



What you can do. Members of the [TAILOR TO YOUR AUDIENCE] community should understand that finding an HIV vaccine that works for everyone depends on participants of all races/ethnicities, genders and socioeconomic backgrounds.

- Let others know you support HIV vaccine research.
- Educate others about the need for an HIV vaccine.
- Support vaccine volunteers and/or volunteer yourself.

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] will be [NAME LOCAL ACTIVITIES] on [DATE(S)]. On May 18th, you too can help. Wear a red AIDS ribbon upside down and celebrate the *real people* and *real progress* of HIV vaccine research.

For more information about HIV Vaccine Awareness Day or HIV vaccine research call 1-800-HIV-0440 or visit www.aidsinfo.nih.gov, www.vrc.nih.gov or www.hvtn.org.

[YOUR NAME] is [TITLE] of the [HVTU/ORGANIZATION NAME].